



What protects me from the flu*?

1. The flu vaccine

The flu vaccine protects you from the 3 types of flu that will most likely cause serious illness. Every year those types change, so **get vaccinated every year**. It's best to get vaccinated in October or November, but the flu season lasts several months, so you can still get it later.

2. Respiratory Hygiene

You can spread germs even before you become ill, so **always cover your cough** with a tissue, throw it away, then clean your hands (see #3). When you cough into your hands, you can then contaminate everything and everyone you touch. So cough into your sleeve if you don't have a tissue.

3. Hand hygiene

You can spread germs on your hands **to yourself** by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. You can also spread germs on your hands **to others** by touching items they will touch later. Prevent spreading germs by frequently using soap and water to wash your hands, or use alcohol-based hand products to remove germs if your hands are not visibly soiled.

4. Staying hydrated

Dry skin and mucus membranes (the inside of your nose mainly) can crack and make it easier for germs to enter. **Drink plenty of liquids, use lotions, and consider using a humidifier to help stay hydrated.** Limit caffeinated fluids like coffee, tea, sodas, and sports drinks that can dehydrate you. Drink water, juice, and other non-caffeinated drinks.

5. Getting enough sleep and exercise

Sleep and exercise to **boost your body's ability to fight illness**. Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep per night to keep their immune systems intact. Regular exercise—even a 30 minute walk—helps you sleep better. People who exercise often have been shown to have milder symptoms and faster recovery.

6. Staying home

If you have symptoms such as fever, aches, chills, and tiredness, especially with fast onset, stay home. This allows you to **recover more quickly and prevent exposing others** to your illness.

7. Antiviral prescription medication

To treat flu, they must be started within 48 hours of flu symptoms. To prevent the flu, they may be used for people with certain risk factors who were exposed to the flu. Remember, a virus causes the flu, and antibiotics don't work against viruses. Antiviral medications are not a substitute for getting the vaccine.

*The flu, or influenza, is a viral illness spread from person-to-person by respiratory droplets. Persons aged 65 years and older, children under 2 years, and persons of all ages with certain medical conditions are at high risk for hospitalization and death during flu season. Nearly 20,000 people die of influenza-related illnesses in the United States every year.